Analysis of the Meaning of "Critical Architecture" in Contemporary Architectural Creation

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Abstract

The theory of "critical architecture" intervenes from the perspective of architecture and society and culture, giving a richer connotation to contemporary architecture, and providing a new perspective for understanding the complex environment in which architecture is located as a discursive approach to architectural design. Through the analysis of typical cases of contemporary architectural design, it is argued that the theory of "critical architecture" has positive significance as a design strategy to balance various factors to guide contemporary architectural design.

Keywords

1. OVERVIEW OF "CRITICAL ARCHITECTURE"

The Eliot Noyes Professor of Architectural Theory at Harvard University Graduate School Michael -Hayes was the first to define the concept of "critical architecture" in his 1984 article "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form". Since then, critical architecture has gradually changed people's previous understanding of architecture. While traditional architecture considers architecture as a discipline that deals with space, form or function, critical architecture gives architecture a richer meaning.

In his article, Professor Hayes systematically reviews two basic attitudes that have long existed in architecture regarding the relationship between architecture and culture in a broad sense: one is "architecture as a cultural instrument", i.e. "architecture is fundamentally an incidental phenomenon, dependent on socio-economic and political factors as well as on technological processes, and exists as its multiple phases and variants. and exists as its multiple phases and variants". In other words, architecture is seen as a concrete materialization of the synthesis of the different forces of will in which it is located, objectively determined by the external environment. The second is "architecture as autonomous form", i.e. "the powerlessness of the absolute autonomy of the form, which makes architecture disarm itself from the beginning, acknowledging its impotence in social and political issues, closing its eyes and ears in order to maintain its purity". This reflects the systematic nature of architecture: architecture can also be completely free from the interference of other disciplines, simply by solving the problems of architectural form to complete and form its own internal set of methods. Thus architecture can also ignore the historical and human environment in which it is located.

There is no doubt that it is undesirable to look at architecture from an isolated and one-sided perspective alone, and it is the uncertainty of this "third possibility" ---- between the two extreme attitudes that gives critical architecture a richer expression.Critical architecture, therefore, emphasizes the combination of the two, but also focuses on the respective expressions of these two attitudes. is a clever balance between resistance and reflection of culture. . Professor Hayes explores the place of critical architecture by reinterpreting some of

the pioneering projects of the modernist master Mies: Mies "tries to attribute the source of meaning of architectural design to the perception of architectural surfaces and volumes that are assumed to belong to a particular place and time, to a time period supported by a certain context ". As in the 1922 skyscraper proposal, "the building surfaces are alternately covered with transparent or fully reflective glass curtain walls that, depending on the light environment and point of view, either absorb, reflect, or distort images of urban life underneath". This new architectural volume and form is open to feedback on the cultural and social context in which it is located. In the competition proposal for Berlin Alexanderplatz, however, Mies refuses to enter into a dialogue with the character of the context. The volume of the building ----, that is, the relationship of the building's form to its surroundings, is not taken into account, and the completely different form of the square ---- confronts the circular plan of Alexanderplatz's historical legacy, which reflects the attitude of "architecture as autonomous form. This reflects the attitude of "architecture as autonomous form". This is why Professor Hayes concludes in his article: "Mies would like to see his buildings as places where two different types of elements meet: one is intentional, pre-determined and rational; the other is contingent, unanticipated and unspoken. His work can neither be seen in isolation as the product of a reconciliation of different external forces, nor can it be summarized as a dogmatic, repeatable formal law.

Professor Hayes also suggests the responsibility of architectural criticism: "to make architecture always actively occupy a cultural position - as an architectural intention with a clear political and intellectual outcome" and "to make the cultural meaning of architecture constantly clear". Thus, critical architecture starts from a theoretical level, but does not only remain theoretical, but also plays a key role in guiding the practice of architectural design: as a discursive approach, a comprehensive understanding of the complex environment in which architecture is situated.

2. EXPLORATION OF CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTS

Professor Hayes's viewpoint "stirred up a thousand waves" and sparked a heated discussion in the architectural design and theoretical research communities around the world. Faced with the concept of critical architecture, which was originally based on the Western tradition, many architects and architectural theorists have joined the discussion.

Dr. Zhu Tao's article " The Recent Controversy of Western "Criticism" and the State of Contemporary Chinese Architecture" published in Time Architecture subdivides "criticalism" into two threads: "the criticality of the ontological language" and "the criticality of social practice" of architecture and develops them in turn. In his article "Criticism", he subdivides "criticalism" into two threads: the "critique of ontological language" and the "critique of social practice" of architecture, and develops them in turn. He argues that, in terms of "the criticality of ontological language", since architectural art is closely connected with society and all aspects of human life, its ontological language can only be maintained in a relatively autonomous state. The work of architects such as Zhang Yonghe and Liu Jiakun focuses on the "use of architectural language" ---- through the active use of modern architectural language to make the language take root and grow in the contemporary cultural context. In terms of the "critical social practice" of architecture, in the contemporary political, economic and cultural situation, with the acceleration of urbanization and the emergence of a series of social problems, architects should actively engage in the "critical social practice", actively reflect and change the social practice. They should actively reflect on and change the practice mode of "no value judgment" which is detached from the historical context and avoids political issues.

Through his dissertation, Dr. Zhu Tao not only discerns contemporary architectural design activities from a theoretical critical perspective, but also tries to find out through his own

practice how architects should define the relationship between architecture and the real society in the midst of huge changes in social reality.

Practice work one: Sichuan Huacun Hope Primary School. The project is located in the remote mountainous area of Deyang, Sichuan Province, and was built with private donations. Due to local conditions, it was not possible to use the usual urban structural forms and building materials for this new building, but rather red shale bricks and a few pieced-together building components (light steel roofing for the classrooms and corridors on the top floor, brick and concrete for the main building). In theory, it could naturally be classified as "regionalism," but in practice the building is much more complex than a theoretical label of "regionalism. Local materials are not as cheap as one might think. Due to the scarcity of forests, the price of wood was actually very expensive, and the lack of transportation made it difficult for materials from outside to enter the area, so local brick and tile producers took advantage of the opportunity to raise prices, making local products more expensive than those from nearby cities. Even the bricklaying required hiring skilled workers from nearby cities to guide them on site. Such factors make the design of this building entangled in the reality of the constraints and become ambiguous and difficult to categorize. As you can imagine, the construction process for such a project was fraught with bickering, bargaining and compromise. Ultimately the building was constructed at a very low cost level (civil works cost about ¥500/m^2).

However, it is worth emphasizing that in such a special building, the architect did not give up the pursuit of aesthetics because of the economic and technical constraints. It provides bright and spacious classrooms, large outdoor corridors for outdoor activities on rainy days, and a new three-dimensional warped sloping roof (rows of steel columns supporting a series of small wood trusses with graduated slopes, covered with wood purlins and asbestos shingles) combined with a traditional sloping roof that echoes the mountainous terrain, with all materials remaining in their rustic colors and without excessive decoration. All these give the building a unique image of simplicity, vividness and elegance, bringing decency, dignity and heartfelt joy to the local people. Here, the architect's work does not become negative and decadent because of the poor realistic conditions nor does it use whitewashing to over-glorify the realistic conditions. "real" beauty.

Practice 2: Shenzhen Wenjindu Passenger Terminal . This project tells an entirely different story. Located in the heart of the metropolis, large in scale (38,000 square meters), costly (170 million yuan), unique in image, and designed and built with advanced computer graphic analysis techniques, it is an ambitious "ultra-modern" work. The building is located on a narrow triangular site in the heart of Shenzhen, surrounded by high rises and elevated bridges. The architect's strategy is to move away from the current "tower + podium" approach to high-rise buildings and to compress all functions into one large, single volume in three dimensions, thus inserting a completely different object into the existing chaotic and cluttered urban space and creating a new architectural "completion". ". This difference creates a great tension between the building and its surroundings.

The architect's intention is to create a "different" kind of high-density city in a high-density, diverse urban environment: highly integrated in itself, it succeeds in creating a "discrete" and alienating effect externally, while internally it provides a series of exciting public It provides a series of exciting public spaces for a never-ending drama of urban culture in which people, vehicles, and logistics are intertwined in three dimensions. The architectural design is based on an extensive analysis of the landscape, orientation, daylight and relationship with the surrounding urban environment. In fact Zhu Tao's proposal was selected by the jury for implementation in the initial competition, mainly because of its excellent solution to the problem of traffic flow and parking for coaches, as well as the relationship between other kinds

of traffic and pedestrian flows in a narrow site. In short, the Wenjindu Passenger Terminal starts from a high-quality aesthetic pursuit and ends up with a strong social engagement.

The juxtaposition of the above two different works contains many layers of cultural significance, and Zhu Tao does not deviate from reality, whitewash reality, nor does he bury his professional pursuit for the sake of the real situation, but adopts an appropriate strategy based on the various tensions and heterogeneities in reality, and strives to obtain a cultural balance, which fully reflects the "critical" attitude in architectural exploration. This fully reflects the "critical" attitude in architectural exploration. This may also coincide with Liu Jiakun's strategy of "rural/urban" dichotomy.

3. REFLECTION

"Contemporary architects, as commodity makers, are placed in the cycle of mass production and inevitably have to meet a large number of orders for their products; as cultural exponents, they have to start the construction of a language at the zero beginning of a fractured cultural tradition and expect to develop a "mature" language in a short period of time; as modern intellectuals, and have to precisely position their work in the political and cultural evolution of a rapidly changing society ---- its degree of difficulty can be imagined!" Faced with the current development of society, Dr. Zhu Tao's view still has profound implications: how many of those "post-critics" can seriously, sincerely and thoroughly recognize or care about the social crisis implicit in the political, economic and cultural situation? After all, promoting the "pragmatic" concept of "post-criticism" and emphasizing "benefit over criticism" will only encourage a profit-oriented commercialism.

There are still too few "critical social practice" architects who adopt a "methodological design", who enthusiastically and meticulously study design methods and who carefully and responsibly design according to them. If the architectural design community is to survive and develop in a harmonious way, there needs to be some "critical" force to actively and tirelessly intervene and regulate at every contradiction. In response to the current situation, perhaps we can allow theoretical criticism to be separated from practice for a while, and put forward independent thinking or even challenging questions, so as to start a wave of thinking in the architectural design community, which may be beneficial to promote the early integration of critical theory and practice. Because theory is about "making action intellectual" ---- architectural theory will enable architects to have an awareness of the "contemporaneity" of their architectural products and their social consequences in practice. Only then will a creative and progressive practice be possible.

Of course, the exploration of architectural language such as space, form and construction is the central work of contemporary architectural ontology and culture construction, and a large part of this exploration work ---- such as spatial feeling, formal interest and poetics of construction is beyond the scope of "criticality", which is also an important component of the vitality of architecture. Architects should also pay enough attention to these vibrant creative elements and adopt appropriate analysis and application strategies.

How can contemporary architects strike a balance between the urge to create and consume and limited natural resources? How can we meet the needs of today's sustainable society? How can the formal aesthetics of contemporary architecture be highly integrated with social participation? The answers to these questions can only be found through the painstaking efforts of architects. ---- And perhaps it is the meaning of contemporary "critical architecture" that triggers these deep thoughts in the process of architectural creation.

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